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ABSTRACT

This paper contains learning activities on aging for use with elementary, high school, and university students in health, family relationships, social studies, and art courses. The activities are intended to help youth develop a more realistic understanding of the aging process and to become aware of both the problems and benefits associated with aging. The learning activities are organized by different teaching methods. Discussion is an excellent method to teach concepts related to aging. To stimulate discussion, a true-false questionnaire is provided which will help students identify their attitudes and knowledge about aging and being old. Role playing can provide students with an understanding and empathy for the dilemmas often faced in old age. Various role-play situations are presented. A third teaching method suggested is panels. Older persons participating on a panel can share their experiences and feelings about being old. Written exercises are another method which may help to stimulate discussion about aging. Suggestions for written exercises are included. For example, students write a story on "How I hope to be when I am old." Group or individual projects can provide students with an opportunity to interact with older persons. Stuients develop family albums, design a family tree, interview older persons, and adopt a grandparent. Special events, such as "Nostalgia Day," "Craft Day," or a "Style Show," can bring students and older persons together. Field visits to a nursing home, a local senior citizen center, or to local organizations that provide services to senior citizens can be a valuable experience for students. Simulations are another technique which can help students to understand what it means to be old by creating a similar life experience for the learner. Simulations dealing with sight, hearing, arthritis, the tactile sense, taste and smell, dental problems, and for physical impairments are suggested. (Author/RM)

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CURRICULUM ACTIVITIES ON AGING

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CURRICULUM ACTIVITIES ON AGING

There are an unlimited number of activities and projects which can be used to teach concepts related to aging. Several are described in this handbook. Most of the activities have been found to work equally well with elementary, high school, and university students. However, adaptations may be required. The activities can be easily adapted into an already existing curriculum, for example in courses such as health, family relationships, social studies, and art. The activities are by no means all-inclusive, but rather should serve as an impetus to the development of other activities. Instructors are encouraged to use their imagination and creativity!

The activities that are selected should assist youth (1) to develop a more realistic understanding of the aging process and (2) to become aware of both the problems and benefits associated with aging. Activities should include a balance between the physical, psychological and social changes that accompany aging.

I. Discussion

Discussion is an excellent technique to teach concepts related to aging. Because of the many stereotypes and misinformation that surround old age, it is suggested that discussions are well-planned. It is important that early in a unit on aging that students are given an opportunity to examine and discuss personal and societal attitudes towards aging and being old.

The results of a well organized and implemented discussion can provide the instructor with a sensitivity to the attitudes, knowledge and needs of students in this subject area. From the student's

perspective, discussion is a good method to generate thought. It enables the student to evaluate his or her own feelings and attitudes concerning the aging processes and old age. Consequently, an increased awareness of one's own attitudes may result in a more realistic and positive outlook toward aging.

Initially, a variety of topics may be discussed relevant to growing older and old age. However, in order that the potential of a discussion is reached, topics must be relevant to the students. Participation will be limited if students cannot relate to or identify with the topic of discussion. It is important to keep in mind that the initial discussion provides a basis for further discussion related to activities and projects.

Questions such as the following are good starting points from which to begin:

1. What is old? When is being "old" considered to be good? When is "old" not considered to be good?
2. How old is old? When is a person old? How do you know when a person is growing old?
3. How do you feel about growing older and aging?
4. What makes a person seem old?
5. Do you think people like being old? How is being old different from being young?
6. How do old people affect you? For example, their wrinkled skin, slow movements, or gray hair.
7. What do you think it is like to be old?
8. How do you react when you see or talk with an older person?
9. What are the needs of older persons? How are they different from your needs? Similar to your needs?

Another method for beginning the discussion of aging is to give students a listing of "problems" commonly associated with retirement and being old. Have students individually rank the items from those they consider more problematic for older persons to those which they consider least problematic. Then have students form groups of four to five. As a group, have students agree upon a rating of these items. Form the larger group to discuss the students' ratings and the reasons for their rankings. Throughout the discussion, present results of surveys which have been conducted with the older population. The National Council on Aging's publication, Myths and Realities of Aging is an excellent resource. It is also important to emphasize that for any particular older person, the items which he/she feels are most problematic may be quite different from the "average" found in surveys.

Items which can be included in such a rating scale are:

- Boredom
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Health
- Crime
- Marital relationships
- Death bereavement
- Legal affairs
- Finances
- Loss of work relationships
- Living arrangement
- Loneliness

A "true-false" questionnaire given at the beginning of a unit can help to identify the attitudes and knowledge students have about aging and being old. It can also stimulate discussion.

Myths and Realities
About Aging

T F 1. Most older people are senile.

T F 2. Less than 5 percent of persons 65 years of age and older live in nursing homes.

T F 3. The majority of older people are neglected by their families.

T F 4. Older people are generally obsessed with death.

T F 5. The average older person has lost desire and capacity for sex.

T F 6. Many older persons can be rehabilitated, both physically and mentally.

T F 7. Old age can be a healthy and satisfying time of life.

T F 8. In the absence of disease and social problems, most old people remain productive and active.

T F 9. The aged can live on considerable less income than the young because they do not need as much for clothing, transportation, entertainment, recreation and education.

T F 10. Social Security provides most older people with a comfortable retirement income.

T F 11. Political conservatism increases with age.

T F 12. Medicare has eradicated the economic burden of illness in late life.

T F 13. Most older persons want others to make decisions for them.

T F 14. Visual and hearing impairments are common among the elderly.

T F 15. Old age is a second childhood.

T F 16. The average life span of whites is greater than that of other racial groups.

T F 17. The elderly are inclined to solve problems on the basis of past solutions rather than experimenting with new solutions.

T F 18. Most elderly can expect retirement to reduce their incomes by 50 percent or more from their pre-retirement levels.

T F 19. An older person is beyond the stage he can contribute to society.

T F 20. Sensory deprivation and loss of mobility tend to isolate the older person.

T F 21. Most employers are reluctant to hire the elderly.

T F 22. As people age, they tend to become more fault-finding, demanding, complaining, irritable and suspicious.

T F 23. Mental abilities do not decline because of age.

T F 24. Older people are unable to adjust to change.

T F 25. It is generally a mistake for persons over 65 to marry.

T F 26. Persons over 65 are generally to rigid to learn new tasks.

T F 27. Most of the elderly resent young people.

T F 28. The elderly are bound to go downhill as they lose jobs, spouses and old friends.

T F 29. Older people should be discouraged from reminiscing about the past.

T F 30. Intelligence decreases with age.

II. Role Playing

Role playing can provide students with an understanding and empathy for the dilemmas often faced in old age. There are an endless number of situations which older persons face in everyday life which may be role played. These situations might encompass various physical and emotional aspects of transportation, food, housing, income and health. The instructor should attempt to create situations or dilemmas which are relevant to the students.

Prior to role playing, instructors should answer and clarify any questions students have concerning the situations. This may help to prevent misinterpretations or interruptions of the situations. Students should be instructed to act just as they feel the person being role played would act. The rest of the class should be instructed to observe the situations. Giving the students specific things to look for during the role play is often helpful.

Situation 1:

You have just retired after working forty years at a job which you liked. You did not want to retire but the company had mandatory retirement at 65. You are talking with three other older persons who are retired. Mr. Jones, 70, has been retired for 10 years and has found his retirement satisfactory. Mrs. Carlisle, 63, has been a widow for seven years; she was a housewife most of her life. Mr. Miles, 85, is married, retired 20 years, and is experiencing a decline in his health.

Situation 2:

Pretend you are an older person. Close your eyes and talk about yourself.

Situation 3:

Your grandmother has lived with your family for the past ten years. Several months ago she was suddenly afflicted by a stroke. Since that time she has been completely dependent upon your family to be

fed, clothed, bathed, etc. Your parents decide that her health needs demand more of your family than they are able to provide for her. The decision is made to place her in a local nursing home. She is your favorite grandmother and you have always felt a special closeness to her.

Situation 4:

It is 6 o'clock rush hour at the grocery store. You are at the check-out stand and there is a line of 10 people anxiously waiting behind you. The clerk totals your bill and you discover you do not have enough food stamps to pay for your groceries. You have no cash in your purse.

Situation 5:

The left side of your body is partially paralyzed resulting from a stroke. With some difficulty, you are able to walk with the aid of a cane. You are waiting to cross the intersection of a busy downtown street. The pedestrian sign changes to "walk" and you begin to cross the street. You are about a third across the street and the sign changes to "wait". Several drivers impatiently honk their horns as you block their lanes of traffic.

Situation 6:

You have recently moved into a retirement home. The first day you are settled in the manager brings a

contract for you to sign. You have mild cataracts which prevent you from reading the "fine" print in the contract.

It is important to have a follow-up discussion about the situations role-played so that students can immediately share their reactions and feelings. Questions such as the following may encourage discussion:

1. What did you learn from this situation?
2. What new insights related to older people has this situation given you?
3. What kinds of feelings did the actors have about their "parts"?
4. Were the roles easy or difficult to play? Why?
5. How might this situation affect the way you interact and communicate with older people?
6. How do you feel an older person would feel in such a situation?

III. Panels

Depending upon the community and its resources, an instructor may wish to contact older persons to participate on a panel. They can share their experiences and feelings about being old, and the problems and advantages they feel are associated. Older persons may be located from a number of local sources:

1. American Association of Retired Persons
2. American Association of Retired Teachers
3. Retired Senior Volunteer Program
4. Gray Panthers
5. Senior Citizen Centers

6. Retirement Homes
7. Nursing Homes
8. Housing project for the elderly
9. Volunteer organizations or referral centers which have lists of older persons
10. Local ministers or the students themselves may be able to provide names of seniors willing to participate.

It is important that a positive picture of aging and old age be portrayed, particularly to younger students. Generally, they lack experience with older people. Therefore, it is recommended that the instructor carefully select panel members according to the age and experience of the students. For example, a panel selected for elementary school aged students should be comprised of relatively healthy and well-adjusted older persons, since often times youths' attitudes at this age are easily influenced due to a lack of experience. Once students have had a variety of experiences with older persons, a panel made up of persons of varying physical and mental capacities may help to present a broader perspective.

Prior to the panel discussion, instructors should inform panel members about the nature of the class, time limits on the discussion, or any limitations so as to minimize problems during the panel discussion itself. Any questions panel members may have should also be answered previous to the discussion. In addition, instructors and students should develop a list of questions to be asked of panel members prior to the discussion. The importance of a well organized and planned panel cannot be over-emphasized.

IV. Writing Exercises

Written exercises are another technique which may help to stimulate discussion. Written exercises may take more time for students to express their feelings and thoughts on paper, however, the results may be revealing for both students and instructors. They can enable students to evaluate their feelings concerning old age and aging. In addition, they may provide instructors with insight to attitudes held by students.

Suggestions for written exercises include the following:

1. Have students write ten words or phrases that come to mind when they think of old people. Encourage students to share what they have written during discussion.
2. Have students write a letter to a grandparent, an adopted grandparent, or an older person in the community. To obtain names of older persons in the community, refer to Section III, "Panels".
3. Have students divide a sheet of paper into three columns. At the top of the first column, have them write "Now." At the top of the second column, write "Middle years." At the top of the third column, write "Over 65 Years." Have students list in the first column all of the activities in which they presently participate. List those activities they think they will continue or begin to participate in during the middle years and later life, in the second and third columns respectively. Have students

compare and discuss their lists. How have the lists changed over the life cycle? Why?

4. Have students write a description of what they think they will be like when they are old. Encourage students to share descriptions with others.

5. Have students write a story on "How I Hope To Be When I am Old."

6. Ask students to write on "What I Like or Do Not Like About Older People."

7. Have students complete sentences related to aging, such as:

    a. "An old person is ..."
    b. "Old to me means ..."
    c. "When I am old, I ..."
    d. "Older persons are ..."
    e. "Aging is ..."
    f. "To be old is to be ..."
    g. "Happiness in old age is ..."

8. Select a picture of an older person(s) which is difficult to label. Instruct students to write a paragraph describing what is happening in the picture, the feelings of the older person, etc. An interesting comparison is to have students do the same activity with a similar picture of a young person. During the discussion, consider the similarities and differences students have noted between young and old.

   A version of this exercise is to have students draw pictures of an older person and to write their own short story to accompany the picture.

V. Projects

Group or individual projects can provide students with an opportunity to interact with older persons. Instructor preparation is important. It should include outlining the purposes for the project, listing goals, and listing methods which will be used to accomplish the goals.

It is recommended that the following ideas be modified, adapted and implemented to accommodate ages and needs of the students involved.

1. *Develop albums from infancy to old age.* This technique enables the student to look at his or her own life span development. Have students obtain pictures of themselves in the past as an infant, a toddler, primary age, and elementary age child. Then have the students draw how they think they will look as an adolescent, young adult, middle aged adult, and an older adult.
2. *Design a "family tree."* This is one method which helps the student to gain a broader perspective of age differences and of family heritage. Ask students to obtain pictures of themselves, sisters, brothers, parents, grandparents or other relatives of interest. Depending upon the age level, instructors might ask students to write a family history of each person accompanying the "family tree."

3. *Interviews*. Interviews with older persons can often give students new insights as well as providing the one-to-one contact with an older person. Experience indicates that students should have some educational training related to gerontology, prior to the interview. Educational training might include discussion, role playing, writing exercises or simulation exercises supplemented with factual information. In general, this gives students an awareness and sensitivity toward the realities of aging, and consequently, increases the quality of the interview.

Considerations: Students should select an older person in the community, preferably someone they do not know. To locate older persons to interview, refer to the sources listed in Section III, "Panels."

a. It is important that students ask the older person for permission for an interview, particularly if the interview is to be recorded or taped. At the same time, students should explain in detail the purpose, goals and objectives to the interviewee. The interviewee should have an understanding of his/her involvement in the project.

b. It is recommended that prior to the interview, students make a list of questions to be asked.

c. There are some personal questions the interviewee may not feel comfortable answering. Students should be reminded to use caution when asking personal questions. Also, it is important that the interviewee do most of the talking. Remember, it is an interview.

Questions such as the following may be asked of the interviewee:

a. Where and when were they born?

b. What kinds of activities did they do to occupy their time when they were young?

c. What was school like then they were young?

d. At what age were they married?

e. What did they do on special occasions or holidays (birthdays, Christmas, Easter or Halloween) when they were growing up?

f. What kinds of interests and hobbies have they had throughout their life?

g. What kinds of jobs did they have throughout their life?

h. How many children did they have? How many grandchildren?

i. How old were they when they retired?

j. How do they feel about retirement?

k. What do they like about being retired? What don't they like?

l. What do they see as an advantage about being older? What is the major problem?

m. What was the saddest time of their life? Happiest?

Depending upon the age of the students, have them write a biography of the person they interviewed. The biography might later be shared with other students, or posted on a bulletin board, or shared with an organization in the community. An alternative to

interviewing the older persons themselves, would be to interview persons who work with the elderly, such as doctors, nurses, nurses aides, lawyers, social workers or other professionals.

4. *Develop a notebook* comprised of newspaper and magazine articles and pictures of old people. Similar projects may include designing a bulletin board, or making collages with articles and pictures. Projects of this sort enable students to gain a broad perspective of how older persons are depicted by the media.
5. *Arrange a classroom display* with household items which are no longer commonly used. A display can provide a valuable insight relevant to technological change. Such items may be borrowed from grandparents or older people students may know.
6. *"Adopt a grandparent."* This project provides an opportunity for students to establish a close personal relationship with an older person. The class or the students, individually, may wish to adopt a grandparent. Students might be asked to keep a journal recording subjective thoughts and opinions concerning their relationship with the "grandparent" and growing older, in general. Considerations: "Grandparents" for adoption may be located through various sources, refer to

Section III, "Panels," for a listing.

a. It is essential that instructors and students meet with "grandparents" prior to adopting them to discuss expectations and obligations. This would involve an explanation of the purpose, goals and objectives of the project, length of time persons will serve as a "grandparent", responsibilities, obligations and commitments students and grandparents have to one another. Any questions students or older persons may have should be answered and clarified at this time. Also, instructors should periodically check with grandparents throughout the project to make sure there are no problems. These measures should help to prevent any misunderstandings that may arise.

7. *Arrange for students to spend time as a volunteer* at a senior citizens center, retirement home, nursing home or local agency serving older persons. There are a number of services a student volunteer may provide. Such an activity gives students an opportunity to gain new insights into the services provided, an understanding of the lives of independent and dependent older persons, and a valuable one-to-one contact with older persons. The names and locations of various organizations may be found in the Yellow Pages of the telephone directory under headings such as, "Retirement Homes", "Nursing Homes", "Senior Citizens Service Organizations", or "Social Service Organizations". An area agency on aging may be able to provide additional information.

Considerations:

a. Prior to the volunteer experience, it is important that students have some training to help them understand the needs, concerns and changes experienced by older people. They should have an awareness of the positive and negative aspects of working with the elderly.

b. Training should include the dissemination of factual information, supplemented with simulation exercises. Adequate training may help to avoid any problems which may later arise due to lack of information. In addition, students should receive adequate information concerning their own volunteer experience. For example, if a student will be volunteering at a nursing home, she/he must be aware of the needs and conditions of the residents in that particular nursing home.

c. If instructors feel they do not have adequate background in gerontology to provide training, assistance can be obtained from several sources such as the following:

   (1) a person who has had considerable experience working with the elderly,

   (2) a social service director of a nursing home,

   (3) director of a senior citizen center.

   Also, many facilities will provide training for a volunteer.

d. Instructors should be cautious in selecting the sites. It is important to keep in mind that the volunteer experience should be a positive experience for the student. When selecting sites, instructors should check for overall atmosphere/environment attitudes of staff and older persons at the site. A student's previous contact with older persons may be an important consideration.

e. Instructors should contact the directors of the organizations to make arrangements. Once an appointment is set, the purpose, goals and objectives of the experience should be presented to the director. The director may wish to modify or make changes at this point in order to meet the needs of the particular organization. Further plans and details may be worked out at this time.

f. It is recommended that the student and director meet prior to beginning the experience. This is a good time for the director to answer any questions the student may have—as well as a chance to become acquainted. In the long run, it may help the student to feel more comfortable within his "volunteer" site.

g. It is important that instructors maintain contact with the directors of the organizations throughout the volunteer experience. When problems arise during the experience, they may be resolved as soon as possible.

h. At the conclusion of the experience, it is recommended that the instructor, the student and director or contact person at the organization meet to evaluate the experience. This may prove to be valuable for all three persons.

8. *Make a film or take photographs of older people.* Have students collect impressions of older people on film. Photographs may be used to develop a bulletin board related to "aging" in the classroom, at a local agency or in a physician's office. Students should be encouraged to enter photographs in local photography contests. A film might be developed around a central theme such as food and the elderly, housing and the elderly, transportation and the elderly,

income, or it might just emphasize faces of older people. Instructors are encouraged to use their creativity and imagination—as well as that of the students.

9. *Research problem areas related to older persons.* Have students study and research specific problem areas relevent to the elderly. Such areas might include housing, income, transportation, legal assistance, consumer protection, health institutions and recreational activities within the community. Students should survey, evaluate and suggest improvements. Where appropriate, a copy of the research project and recommendations might be given to the area agency on aging, state program on aging or to an agency dealing specifically with the problem area.

10. *Provide services to older persons in the community.* This activity provides a service to an older person as well as the one-to-one contact experience. Tasks may include:

    a. General yard maintenance
        (1) pulling weeds
        (2) mowing lawns
        (3) garden work
        (4) raking leaves

    b. General house maintenance
        (1) helping with inside cleaning
        (2) painting

    c. Washing cars

    d. Shopping

e. Paying bills

f. Escorting an older person to an appointment

Considerations:

a. As mentioned previously, it is essential students have some training related to aging and old age.

b. Older persons in need of such assistance may be contacted through several sources:
(1) senior citizens center
(2) local referral center
(3) senior organizations
(4) local ministers
(5) students may be able to supply names of persons in need.

c. Once older persons are contacted, they must be informed about the service to be provided. Perhaps this might be done with a flyer or students could visit the person to explain the service. The older person and the student must have a clear understanding of the responsibilities and obligations involved.

d. It is recommended that the tasks be closely supervised by a parent or the instructor.

VI. Events

There are a number of events in which students and older persons together can become involved. Suggestions for events may include:

1. *Sponsor a "Nostalgia Day".*

Invite local senior citizens to bring antiques or anything which is no longer commonly used. Ask older persons to share stories about the item which they have brought.

2. *Sponsor a "Craft Day".*

   Invite senior citizens to demonstrate crafts not often seen today.

3. *Sponsor a "Style Show".*

   Invite older persons in the community to wear clothes styled from an earlier period in their life. Ask each person to write a commentary about their outfit.

Considerations:

1. Older persons may be recruited for events in several ways.

   a. sending invitations
   b. posters
   c. flyers
   d. announcements on the local radio station
   e. new articles in the local newspaper

2. If possible, transporations should be arranged to and from the event.

VII. Field Visits

Field visits can be a valuable "on the site" experience for students. Suggestions for possible visits follow:

1. *Arrange a field trip to a local retirement home, nursing home, or senior housing project.* If possible, the instructor should arrange for visits to several housing facilities to give students a broader perspective of the housing alternatives available to older people.

2. *Arrange a visit to a local senior citizens center.* Depending upon the age level of the students, each student could be assigned to research a service which the center provides for seniors, such as blood pressure checks, transportation, educational programs, etc. Students might also be asked to interview an older person while visiting the center.
3. *Arrange visits to local agencies and organizations which provide direct and indirect services to older persons within the community.* Such agencies might include the food stamp center, social security office, welfare office, veterans office, mental health office, state employment office or a nutrition program. The local commission on aging or an area agency on aging are agencies which provide indirect services. If it is impossible to arrange visits, an employee of the agency or organization could be asked to talk to the group.

Considerations:

Preparation is particularly important when visiting nursing homes. It is very easy for students, high school as well as younger students, to have negative attitudes of the elderly and aging reinforced by a visit to a facility if such a visit is not preceded by preparation. This is particularly true for students who have had few contacts with older persons.

VIII. Simulations

Simulations are a technique which can help students to understand what it means to be old by creating a similar life experience for the learner. Such experiences provide an appreciation of the changes which occur with aging and the effects these have on the older person. Simulations are particularly effective for sensitizing students to the sensory changes which accompany the aging process.

Adequate preparation before utilizing simulations is essential. A thorough discussion concerning changes enables students to develop greater appreciation for the actual simulations.

Essentially, the same simulations may be used with different age groups. However, tasks of greater difficulty may be given to older students. It is important for instructors to develop the tasks according to the students' mental and physical abilities since the purpose of simulations may be defeated if students are unable to accomplish a given task. Experience has indicated that younger students (i.e., elementary school age) gain more from the experience when all are given one impairment at the same time. The authors have found that too many impairments at one time can be distracting with this age group.

Older students (i.e., high school age) are better able to deal with and understand several impairments at one time. It is suggested instructors divide students into groups of four or five with each person in the group having a different impairment. Students are then provided tasks in which they interact with one another.

Because age-related changes are often perceived in a negative way, it is important that the simulation are presented from both a realistic and a positive perspective. Instructors should emphasize that not all elderly persons have impairments to the degree which is simulated in the exercises and that many persons compensate for the impairments.

1. *Sight*

Evidence indicates changes with vision occur with aging. General changes which occur include decreased visual acuity, farsightedness, decreased sensitivity to light, and a decreased ability to adapt to glare. Bec se vision plays a significant role in communication between human beings, changes in sight can be very problematic. Thus, simulated loss of sight may enable students to develop an awareness and sensitivity to problems surrounding decreased eyesight in old age.

The authors have found several useful mediums to simulate vision loss. One method involves folding a piece of cellophane, handi-wrap or saran wrap which is then taped in place over the eyes. Yellow cellophane is suggested because as the lens of the eye ages, it yellows. This yellowing affects color perception. The cellophane should be folded so that vision is slightly impaired when placed over the eyes. Folding the wrap too many times may defeat the purpose of the exercise. Alternatives might include utilizing cheesecloth or cling guaze or a similar blindfold which partially impairs vision.

Exercises:

a. Ask a student to read out loud a paragraph from a source with which they are unfamiliar.

b. Provide students with a piece of fabric (2"x2"), thread, needle, and four-eyed button. Have students sew the button the fabric.

c. Have students walk several steps across the room.

d. Provide students with a zerox copy of a page from a phone book. Ask them to find several names.

2. *Hearing*

Hearing loss in persons over 65 years of age is more common than visual problems. The two major types of hearing loss are (1) decibel loss, reduced ability to hear sounds of low intensity and (2) presbycusis, loss of the ability to hear higher frequency sounds. Older people, even those with relatively little hearing loss, have greater difficulty in making the fine distinctions required to hear speech than do younger persons. As with eyesight, the ability to hear is important to effective communication. The inability to hear is often associated with many of the social and psychological problems hard-of-hearing persons encounter.

Experience has provided several methods to simulate hearing loss. Ear plugs have proved to be an easy and efficient method to dull sound. Industrial earplugs have been found to be the most effective. However, an instructor may find ear plugs to be costly. Other alternatives may be used: for example, cotton balls may be placed in the ears to filter out sounds; strips of masking tape placed over the outer ear filter sounds; ear muffs may also be used.

If an instructor is unable to obtain previously suggested materials, Zenith Corporation has developed a record entitled "Getting Through" as a sales promotion for their hearing aids. The record contains an excellent explanation of frequency and hearing loss. Varying degrees of hearing loss are simulated with an "Unfair Hearing Test". This test provides an excellent opportunity for students to actually experience hearing loss.

Exercises:

a. Read a sentence to students in a soft whisper. Ask students to repeat what you read.

b. Have students pair up in two's. Have one stand behind the other and read a sentence. Have the student repeat what was read.

c. Play a record at a decreased volume. Provide students with questions beforehand that they are to answer in relation to material presented in the record.

3. *Arthritis*

Arthritis is a condition which causes joints to stiffen and become slower in movement and flexibility, thus affecting a person's dexterity.

Several materials are useful in simulating the arthritic condition. Hot mittens suited to the student's hand are one method which may be used. It is important that the mits fit the student's hand size in order that the tasks can be performed. Mits that are too large or too small may be an obstacle to experiencing the arthritic condition. Taping the fingers in a bent and stiff position with masking tape has proven to be an effective way of simulating arthritis. However, implementation of this technique is more consuming, therefore, it is

suggested instructors provide adequate time before hand to cut pieces of masking tape. Another suggestion is taping a splint on several fingers to impair the use of the joints.

Exercises:

a. Have students perform tasks often taken for granted in everyday life. This might include peeling an orange, tying a shoe lace, buckling a shoe, buttoning a shirt or sweater. This exercise may have more of an impact if instructors ask students to perform the tasks without an impairment. Then give students the impairment and ask them to perform the tasks.

b. Provide pencil and paper and have students write their name and a paragraph on a subject that you give them.

c. Provide students with a needle, thread, a piece of fabric approximately 2"x2" and a button. Ask students to sew the button on the fabric.

d. Ask students to perform any task which requires fine coordination of the fingers.

4. *Tactile*

The tactile sense allows a person to distinguish objects through touch. Sensations experienced through touching may become less pronounced as a person ages. A decline of one's tactile abilities may be caused by arthritis, decreased use of muscles, an increase of tremors caused by Parkinson's disease, or cardiovascular problems which cause sensory difficulties. The sensation of touch is part of the individual's capacity to adapt to the environment.

Several methods have been found successful in simulating loss of the tactile sense. Surgical gloves are one excellent resource; however, these must be obtained from a physician,

nurse or a pharmacist. An alternative to this resource, would be to wrap tape (such as masking or scotch) around the tips of the fingers to impede the sense of touch.

Exercises:

a. Have students pair up into two's. Ask them to slowly and gently run their fingers across the other's face.

b. Have students play a card game.

c. Obtain several different roughnesses of sandpaper. Have the students feel the differences by touching the samples.

d. Place a piece of paper in front of each student, ask them to pick it up.

5. *Taste and Smell*

As a person ages, there are changes in the ability to taste and smell. Studies indicate that the number of taste buds decreases with age. In addition, loss in the ability to smell may affect the ability to detect certain odors. Certain foods may also taste differently from when the person was younger.

There are several materials which are useful in simulating the decreases in taste and smell. Foods which are bland or saltless in flavor are good. The authors have found "tasteless" cookies or saltless crackers served with colored (red) water or weak lemonade is an excellent method to simulate the loss of taste and smell. The recipe for bland cookies follows:

1 cup sifted all-purpose flour
1/4 teaspoon baking powder
1/8 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup shortening
1 egg

Begin heating oven to 400°. Grease the cookie sheet lightly. Sift together flour, powder, and salt. Add shortening and work with a spoon until creamy. Add egg.

Thoroughly mix in flour mixture. Refrigerate approximately one hour. Roll 1 teaspoon of dough to form a ball, in 36 pieces. Place 2 inches apart on cookie sheet; press flat with bottom of glass so dough is thin and flat. Press with tines of fork to form design. Bake 6 to 8 minutes or until brown. Makes 36.

Exercises:

a. Give each student one cookie and a small cup of colored water. Instruct students to eat at the same time.

b. Blindfold several students and ask them to identify several foods such as puddings, cake, etc. Foods mixed in a blender may be more difficult to detect.

6. *Dental*

Dental problems are common among the elderly. Gum disease, poor teeth, or badly fitted dentures may affect an older person's eating, nutritional, and speech habits.

Dental impairments may be simulated with anything which is chewable, such as a piece of candy or gum. Students should be instructed to place the gum or candy in their mouth behind the upper front teeth.

Exercises:

a. Have students read a paragraph from a book to the group.

b. Have students divide up into two's. Have them introduce the other person and tell something about them.

7. *Exercises for Combined Impairments* (Adapted from Engs, Barnes, and Wantz. Health Games People Play, 1976.)

Any of the above exercises may be used with combined impairments. Listed below are additional exercises which allow students to interact with one another.

a. Materials: Enough to accommodate number of groups
   (1) needles
   (2) spools of thread
   (3) fabric markers
   (4) scissors
   (5) pieces of fabric approximately 5" x 6"
   (6) buttons
   Instructions are to be read by the person with the dental impairment. Read the following directions in the order listed below. Give only verbal assistance.

   (1) to person with vision impairment: Thread the needle. Take scissors, cut the material in the shape of a circle that is 5 to 6" in diameter.

   (2) to the person with arthritic impairment: Sew the button in the center of the fabric.

   (3) to person with hearing impairment: Assuming the piece of cloth is a face and the button a nose, complete facial characteristics with the pen.

b. Instructions are to be read by all group members.
   Materials: tinker toys.

   With your tinker toys build a car. Each group member should contribute at least two pieces to the car.

c. Materials:
   (1) Deck of cards (enough for every group)
   Instructions are to be read by all group members.
   Play three games of war in each group.

Considerations:

1. After specific roles have been assigned each person in the group must play that role throughout the entire task. Instructors must emphasize the importance of students abiding by the instructions for each exercise if they are to benefit from the experience.
2. Time limitations should be placed on each activity. It is not expected that all students will complete the tasks.

Since task performance usually leads to a variety of reactions, it is recommended that instructors plan adequate time for follow-up

discussions. This provides an opportunity to discuss the interactions between students while they were impaired. Questions such as the following provide a good basis for discussion of reactions:

1. How did you feel about being handicapped? What were your reactions to the handicap?

2. In what ways were others in your group helpful to you? How did other persons react to you?

3. What kinds of similarities do you see between yourself and older persons?

4. What insights have you gained as a result of this activity?

5. What can you do to make it easier to relate to an older person who has the same handicap as you had?

Because a primary goal of simulations is to increase the student's awareness and sensitivity to age-related changes, it is recommended that students are given an opportunity to interact with older persons immediately following the simulations. For example, the instructor may arrange for a visit to a local nursing home or to an elderly housing project. This might be an excellent time to begin class or individual projects involving students and older people in the community.